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PORTABLE PET-FEEDING CONTAINER

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FIELD OF THE INVENTION

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The present invention relates to feeding accessories for pets, and more particularly to a portable pet-feeding container for making food and water accessible to a pet while at home or when traveling.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

20 Just as with humans, it is important that pets be provided with food and water, whether at home or while traveling. Dogs in particular are taken many places by walking, car, train, plane, or by a combination of the
25 aforementioned transportation means. Many times, food or water and other supplies are not adequately available when traveling with a dog, especially when walking or jogging.

For example, it is often inconvenient to simply carry
30 food and water on short trips or walks with a dog. Although some owners may take these necessities along, it is cumbersome to simultaneously carry separate food and water containers and control the dog.

5 Further, many people use separate containers for food
and water when at home and when traveling with the pet
because the containers used at home do not seal to hold food
or water and are cumbersome to travel with. To eliminate
this duplicity of feeding containers for home and travel a
10 portable pet-feeding container which can hold food and water
and be easily transported while traveling with the pet is
needed.

SUMMARY

15 In accordance with the present invention, a portable
pet-feeding container and method are provided for use while
traveling with a pet. The portable pet-feeding container
includes a reservoir for holding food or water, a lid to
seal the reservoir, a skirt, surrounding the reservoir,
20 which includes structure for attaching a leash, and a handle
connected to the skirt. Advantageously, the portable pet-
feeding container can be used to hold food or water or other
supplies and can be transported conveniently while traveling
with a pet.

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 In one aspect of the present invention, a portable pet-
feeding container system is provided which includes two
portable pet-feeding containers removably connected to one
another. The system can be used to hold both food and water
30 and other supplies simultaneously and can be transported
conveniently while traveling with a pet.

5 In another aspect of the present invention, a method is
provided for using the portable pet-feeding container while
traveling with a pet. The method includes providing a
portable pet-feeding container with at least one reservoir
for holding food and/or water, said at least one reservoir
10 having a skirt around the outside of the reservoir to allow
the container to sit on a floor; providing leash coupling
structure attached to the reservoir; providing food or water
in the reservoir; fastening a removable lid onto the open
top of the reservoir to seal the reservoir; connecting a
15 leash to the leash coupling structure; connecting the other
end of the leash to a pet; providing a handle on the
container for use in carrying the portable pet-feeding
container and to control the pet; wrapping the leash around
the skirt to shorten the leash as necessary; and traveling
20 with the pet from a first location to a second location.

In yet another aspect of the present invention, a
method is provided for using the portable pet-feeding
container while traveling with a pet. The method includes
25 providing a first pet-feeding container with a first
reservoir surrounded by a first skirt to allow the first
container to sit on a floor; providing a second pet-feeding
container with a second reservoir surrounded by a second
skirt to allow the second container to sit on a floor;
30 providing food and/or water in the first and second
reservoirs; coupling said first skirt to said second skirt

5 such that a first skirt base is alignable to a second skirt
base; providing leash coupling structure on the first pet
feeding container; connecting one end of a leash to the
leash coupling structure; connecting the other end of the
leash to a pet; using the handles to carry the pet-feeding
10 container system and control the pet; and shortening the
leash as necessary by wrapping the leash around the skirt.
The method may include the additional step of traveling with
the pet from a first location to a second location.

15 A more complete understanding of the invention can be
obtained by reference to the following detailed description
of the preferred embodiments thereof in connection with the
attached drawings.

20 BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Figures 1A - 1E are simplified top, side, handle end,
leash-connecting end, and bottom elevation views of an
embodiment of the portable pet-feeding container 1 of the
present invention;

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Figures 2A - 2D illustrate an embodiment of the
invention with a removable lid 7 and a storage cavity 19;

Figures 3A and 3B show an embodiment of a removable
30 splash resistant ring 36 of the present invention for

5 screwing into the top opening 2a and for providing a splash
resistant opening in the top of reservoir 2;

Figures 4A and 4B are simplified top and side views of
an embodiment of the portable pet-feeding container system
10 of the present invention comprising two containers 1a, 1b,
each of the type shown in FIGS 1A-1E;

Figures 5A - 5C are simplified views of an embodiment
of the hinge coupling structure of the present invention
15 used to rotatably connect containers 1a, 1b to form feeding
system 101 as shown in FIGS. 4A and 4B;

Figures 6A and 6B are schematic views of a method of
using the portable pet-feeding container and system while
20 traveling with a pet from one location to another;

Figures 7A, 7B, 7C and 7D illustrate an additional
embodiment of the invention, wherein protuberances 12a and
12b from one end of container 1 comprise hooks for
25 overlapping the rod 91 about which two containers 1a and 1b
rotate;

Figures 8A, 8B and 8C illustrate various ways of
carrying the pet food container 1 or the pet food system
30 made up of two such pet food containers 1a, 1b while walking
the pet;

5 Figs 9A, 9B, 9C, 9D and 9E illustrate an alternative hinge for joining the containers 1a and 1b to form the pet food system of this invention;

Figs. 10A, 10B, and 10C show an additional alternative
10 embodiment for joining containers 1a and 1b to form another pet food system of this invention.

Figs. 11A, 11B, 11C, 11D and 11E show a variation of the structures shown in Figs. 9A, 9B, 9C, 9D, and 9E wherein
15 instead of a protuberance 97 on container 1, recessed trapezoidal area 97 is used on container 1 together with protuberances 94 and 95 on hinge 92; and

Figs. 12A through 12D show a hinge structure wherein
20 the hinge 122 has sections 123a and 123b together with protuberances 124a and 124b which insert into slots 125a and 125b in the containers 1a and 1b to lock the ends of containers 1a and 1b together to form a feeding system in accordance with this invention.

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The use of similar reference numerals in different figures indicates similar or identical items.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS:

30 The present invention provides a portable pet-feeding container 1. Pet-feeding container 1 includes a reservoir 2

5 (FIG. 1B), a removable lid 7, a skirt 3 (FIG. 1A), which includes a leash coupling structure 100 surrounding and formed integrally with reservoir 2, and a handle 4 for holding pet-feeding container 1 when traveling with a pet.

10 As shown in the embodiment of FIGS. 1A and 1B, reservoir 2 is integrated within skirt 3 to hold food or water. Reservoir 2 extends outwardly nearly to the edge of skirt 3. A circular opening 2a is formed in the top surface of reservoir 2. In one embodiment, the inner circumference
15 of opening 2a is threaded to receive removable lid 7 (FIGS. 2A - 2D) or spill resistant ring 36 (FIG. 3). In one embodiment, illustrated in FIGS. 2A through 2D, removable lid 7 is a twist top lid that seals opening 2a of reservoir 2.

20 FIGS. 2A, 2B, 2C, and 2D show an alternative embodiment of the container of this invention with top 7 placed on the container. An opening 19 is formed in the bottom of the container 1 and lip or ridge 29 is formed at the edge of
25 this opening to hold top 7 in place when top 7 is stored in opening 19. The bottom 6 of skirt 3 slightly flared out to show the bottom of skirt 3. Cap 8 is shown on the end of tube 5 in the handle 4 of the container. FIGS. 2B and 2C show top 7 with screw threads 20 on the outer
30 circumferential surface of top 7 and a rubber grommet 22 to help seal the container when top 7 is firmly screwed into

5 place. FIG. 2B shows nodules 23 around the circumference of the top surface of removable lid 7 to provide grips for the hand and fingers when twisting lid 7 into opening 2a. Of course, other methods for attaching top 7 to the container can be employed including a pop-on top if desired.

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FIG. 2D shows an isometric view of the container 1 of this invention with the top 7 partially inserted into the opening 19 in the bottom of the container 1 and with a handle 4 on top 7 clearly shown in relation to the main body of the container along with protuberances 12a, 12b and 13 on the opposite end of the container from handle 4. The role of protuberances 12a, 12b and 13 will be discussed below in connection with FIGS. 4A, 4B, 5A, 5B and 5C. Top 7 is shown in FIG. 2D having a handle 11 which allows the top 7 to be more easily turned.

FIGS. 3A and 3B show a spill reducing ring 36 capable of being inserted into opening 2a on container 1 to reduce the spillage of water when a dog or other animal drinks from container 1. Ring 36 has an interior surface 37 (FIG. 3B) angled at the angle α from the horizontal to reflect back into the container water or food that may be splashed out of the container while the dog is drinking or eating. The inner edge of the rim 38 is rounded to prevent a dog from cutting his/her tongue or skin on a sharp edge.

5 In one embodiment, spill resistant ring 36 may be threaded around its exterior circumference 31 to allow for twist insertion into opening 2a.

Referring again to FIGS. 1A and 1B, skirt 3 surrounds
10 reservoir 2 in one embodiment. As explained above, skirt 3 includes a cavity 19 for storing, for example, lid 7. Structure for coupling the leash includes a base block 26 with a hole 27, into which a clip 11 (or similar type mechanism) to which a leash is attached can be inserted.
15 Clip 11 or similar mechanism can then be connected to a standard leash 28, as shown in FIG. 6A. In another embodiment, the leash coupling structure can include an automatically rewinding and releasing dog leash of well-known design incorporated into skirt 3.

20 Lid storage cavity 19 is located under reservoir 2, as illustrated in FIG. 1B. Clip 11 may also be stored in storage cavity 19. The bottom surface 3a of skirt 3 is flat to provide stability on a surface when used by a pet for
25 eating or drinking. In one embodiment, rubber circlets 32 (FIG 1E) are placed near each of the outer areas of the base of skirt 3 to provide stability and skid resistance for the portable pet-feeding container 1 when on a surface (FIG. 1E). Two additional elongated rubber pads 33 may be placed
30 near the ends of the extensions 30 of the skirt 3 which hold handle 4 to provide extra stability.

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In one embodiment, handle 4 is connected to skirt 3. Preferably, for strength and low manufacturing cost, handle 4 is molded as a single structure integral with skirt 3. The handle 4 and skirt 3 may include as an internal part thereof additional structure such as metal bands or wires or any other material which will add strength to the handle/skirt structure. In other embodiments, handle 4 may be modular and connected to skirt 3 by screws, rivets or adhesive, for example. Whichever attachment structure is used, the attachment must be strong enough to hold together the handle 4 and skirt 3 when tugged by a strong dog. In one embodiment handle 4 includes a storage tube 5 and a removable storage tube lid 8, as shown in FIGS. 1A and 1B. Storage tube 5 can hold small items, such as a clean up bag, small amounts of food or even a cord for use in tying the dog. One end of storage tube 5 is threaded to receive the threads on the outer circumference of a cap 8 which can be screwed into or onto tube 5 to seal tube 5. Storage tube cap or lid 8 may also include a rubber gasket like that described in conjunction with removable lid 7 to seal tube 5.

Skirt 3 also includes side grooves 27 near the interface between handle 4 and skirt 3 (FIGS. 1A and 1E). Grooves 27 are provided to allow a user to adjust the standard leash length when using the portable pet-feeding

5 container by wrapping the leash around skirt 3 utilizing the
grooves as shown in FIG. 6B, for example.

The aforementioned parts of portable pet-feeding
container 1, including reservoir 2, removable lid 7, skirt
10 3, and handle 4, can be made from plastic, rubber, or metal.

FIG. 1B, a cross-sectional side view along the line
labeled 1B of the structure shown in FIG. 1A, shows that
bottom 18 of reservoir 2 seals the top of cavity 19 in which
15 can be placed top 7. Top 7 is shown in exploded view
removed from the structure of FIG. 1B. The inner
circumference of opening 2a is threaded to mate with threads
on the circumference of top 7 thereby to allow top 7 to be
screwed into opening 2a to form a leak proof seal with the
20 top of reservoir 2.

In another embodiment, cap 8 is a snap-on cap of any
one of several types well-known in the art.

25 FIG. 1C shows the end view of container 1 in FIG. 1A as
shown by the arrows 1C in FIG. 1A. Handle 4 is clearly
visible in the top of FIG. 1C.

FIG. 1D shows the end view of container 1 as shown by
30 the arrows 1d in FIG. 1A. Note that structure 100, namely
tab 26 with opening 27 integrally formed as part of skirt 3

5 for holding a leash is clearly shown in FIG. 1A and in an
end view of FIG. 1D.

FIG. 1E shows the view of the container of FIG. 1A from
the bottom and shows the rubber pads 32 for use in placing
10 the container on a floor so that the container can be used
to allow the dog to eat the food or drink the water
contained therein.

In another embodiment, shown in FIGS. 4A and 4B, two
15 similar portable pet-feeding containers 1a and 1b are
removably coupled to one another to form a portable pet-
feeding container system. In this embodiment, both food and
water may be carried when traveling with a pet. The first
and second portable pet-feeding containers are rotatably and
20 removably coupled to one another such that when folded, the
tops of both pet-feeding containers are adjacent to one
another, as illustrated in FIG. 4B. When folded together
for transport, handles 4a and 4b line up and come together
to form a combined carrying handle while tops 7a and 7b are
25 directly adjacent each other. Each top 7a and 7b seals the
corresponding reservoir to allow food and water to be
carried in leak proof containers while traveling.

FIGS. 5A through 5C illustrate one embodiment of a
30 hinge mechanism to be used to couple first portable pet-
feeding container 1a to second portable pet-feeding

5 container 1b to form the feeding system of FIGS. 4A and 4B. Hinge mechanism 110 includes two arms 12a, 12b on container 1b, two arms 12a, 12b on container 1a, and an end wall 13 on each portable pet-feeding container 1a, 1b as illustrated in FIG. 5A. The two portable pet-feeding containers may be
10 aligned so that the arms 12a, 12b and end walls 13 are interdigitated as shown in FIG. 5A. Two pins 9a and 9b, each with one threaded end, are inserted through holes in arms 12a and 12b and each are screwed into a threaded hole 34 in a corresponding end wall 13, as illustrated in FIG.
15 5A. FIG. 5C shows the view from the bottom of FIG. 5A when containers 1a and 1b are joined together by pins 9a and 9b.

As shown in FIGS. 1A and 5A (FIG. 5A is looking at the container from the bottom of FIG. 1A), protuberances 12a,
20 12b and 13 are arranged such that when the containers 1a and 1b are placed so as to be joined by pins 9a and 9b, protuberance 12a on container 1b is inserted in the slot between end 13 and protuberance 12b on container 1a while protuberance 12a on container 1a is inserted in the slot
25 between protuberance 12b and end 13 on container 1b. Thus, containers 1a and 1b align symmetrically and parallel to each other when joined by pins 9a and 9b.

Alternatively, a single rod 90, as shown in FIG. 5B,
30 can be inserted through the openings in arms 12a, 12b on the two containers as well as through corresponding openings in

5 end walls 13 and secured in position by fasteners of well-known design, such as lock washers and nuts.

FIGS. 6A and 6B show a method for using the portable pet-feeding container 1 (FIG. 1A) and system 101 (FIG. 4A) when traveling with a pet. The portable pet-feeding container 1 or system 101 can be used by itself to carry food or water but as shown above in conjunction with FIGS. 4A, 4B, 5A, 5B and 5C, the portable pet-feeding container 1a (FIG. 4A) can also be coupled to a similar portable pet-feeding container 1b to form a system 101 for carrying both food and water when traveling with a pet. A removable lid 7 is fastened over the reservoirs 2a and 2b containing food or water. One end of a standard leash 28 (FIG. 6A) is then connected to the leash coupling structure and the other end of the standard leash 28 is connected to a pet. The handle of either a single portable pet-feeding container 1 (FIG. 1A) or the combined handles on the two containers 1a, 1b, making up a portable pet-feeding container system 101 (FIG. 4A) can be used like a leash handle to control the pet. The leash 28 may also be shortened as necessary by wrapping the leash 28 around the skirt 3 using the grooves 27 to hold the wrapped-around leash 28. Then the pet and owner can travel from one location to a second location with food and/or water.

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5 The embodiment shown in Fig. 7A through 7D utilizes
hooks as protuberances 12a and 12b on containers 1a and 1b,
to form the pet food system of this invention. As shown in
Fig. 7A, rod 91 has threads on end 91a for allowing rod 91
to be threaded into the threaded opening 13a of end
10 protuberance 13. Head 91b of rod 91 recesses into and rests
in cavity 12c formed in the outer side of protuberance 12a.
As shown in Figs. 7B and 7C, protuberances 12a and 12b are
shaped like hooks with enough space 12d between the end of
container 1b and the end of each hook 12a, 12b to allow rod
15 91 to be slid into place so as to contact the interior
surfaces of hooks 12a and 12b. Once rod 91 has been so
placed and screwed into the interior threads on opening 13a
in end protuberance 13, a second container 1a can be joined
to container 1b by lifting the handle 4a on container 1a
20 such that the hooks 12a and 12b on container 1a can slip in
place over rod 91 already firmly ensconced in the hooks 12a
and 12b of container 1b and thereby lock container 1a to
container 1b. Note that hook 12a on container 1a will fit
between hook 12b and protuberance 13 on container 1b, while
25 hook 12a on container 1b fits between hook 12b and end
protuberance 13 on container 1a. Note further that the head
91b (Fig. 7A) of rod 91 is contained within cavity 12c of
hook 12a on container 1b and therefore end protuberance 13
on container 1a not only is able to slide into place beside
30 protuberance 12a on container 1b, but end protuberance 13
also locks in place rod 91 as shown in Fig. 7D so that rod

5 91 cannot become dislodged. Thus in one embodiment, threads on the interior of opening 13a in end protuberance 13 and on the end 91a of rod 91 are not needed thereby simplifying the structure and lowering the cost.

10 An advantage of this system is that containers 1a and 1b are easily joined together merely by hooking hooks 12a and 12b on one container over rod 91, when rod 91 is in place within hooks 12a and 12b on the other container. When this happens, hooks 12a and 12b on container 1a together
15 with hooks 12a and 12b on container 1b lock rod 91 in place so that the two containers 1a and 1b cannot be dislodged by the animals while eating food. Moreover, when the containers 1a and 1b are rotated about rod 91 so that the tops 7a and 7b of the two containers are directly in contact
20 with each other, the hooks 12a and 12b and protuberance 13 on container 1a together with hooks 12a and 12b and protuberance 13 on container 1b prevent rod 91 from being dislodged.

25 As shown in Figures 8A through 8C, the user can carry containers 1a and 1b when combined as a system by lifting the containers using rod 91 as a handle. Note in Fig. 7D areas 100a and 100b are left open, allowing fingers of a user to be inserted around rod 91 to carry the two
30 containers 1a and 1b as a unit. Moreover, skirts 3a and 3b on the two containers abut directly as shown in Fig. 8A

5 thereby to prevent containers 1a and 1b from taking a
position other than horizontal while being carried upright
as shown in Fig. 8A. Fig. 8B shows a shoulder harness 80
with a buckle 81 for snapping into a protuberance on handle
4 of container 1 to allow the container 1 with the top 7 in
10 place to be carried over the shoulder of the pet owner.
Fig. 8C shows a belt 82 inserted through a slot 83 in skirt
3 of container 1 to allow the container to be carried around
the waist of the user. Note that handle 4 is preferably at
the top of the container when the container is carried using
15 belt 82.

Figs. 9A through 9E show an alternative hinge 92 for
use with this invention to join container 1a to container
1b. In Figs. 9A through 9E, hinge 92 has two portions 93a,
20 93b each of which contains an opening, 96a and 96b,
respectively, to allow the user to use the top portion of
hinge 92 as a handle when portions 93a and 93b are folded to
be essentially vertical and in touch with each other as
shown in FIG. 9D. The hinge 92 is joined to each of
25 containers 1a and 1b by a snap fit involving the insertion
of a trapezoidal extension 97 of container 1 into the
trapezoidal opening 94 of section 93a of hinge 92.
Trapezoidal extension 97 on the right end of container 1
(Fig. 9A) is shown in end view in Fig. 9C. Trapezoidal
30 extension 97 snap fits into trapezoidal opening 94 in hinge
section 93a of hinge 92. A similar trapezoidal extension 97

5 on a second container 1b snap fits into trapezoidal opening
95 on section 93b of hinge 92. Sections 93a and 93b rotate
about pin 96 as shown in Figs. 9A, 9D and 9E to allow
containers 1a and 1b to be joined as shown. In Fig. 9D,
hinge sections 93a and 93b are directly abutting each other
10 such that openings 96a and 96b come together to form a
handle with an opening for use by an owner in lifting the
system containing containers 1a and 1b. Fig. 9E shows
containers 1a and 1b folded together such that the bottoms
of the containers 1a and 1b are directly adjacent each other
15 causing sections 93a and 93b of hinge 92 to lie in the same
plane. The two containers 1a and 1b then can be carried
using the combined handles 4a and 4b. Note that trapezoidal
sections 94 and 95 are formed such that sides 94a, 94b, and
94c of trapezoid 94 directly abut and lock in contact with
20 edges 97a, 97b and 97c of trapezoidal abutment 97 on
container 1a. Likewise, a similar trapezoidal abutment 97
on container 1b has sections 97a, 97b and 97c in direct
contact with edges 95c, 95b and 95a of trapezoidal opening
95 in section 93b of hinge 92. Note that edge 97a of
25 abutment 97 from container 1b contacts and snap locks edge
95c of trapezoidal opening 95 in section 93b of hinge 92
because the container 1b is essentially rotated 180° from
the location of container 1a even though the two containers
1a and 1b are identical.

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5 Figs 10A, 10B and 10C show an additional embodiment of the invention, wherein containers 1a and 1b are formed with symmetric attachment tabs 101 and 102 formed thereon. Tab 101 is a solid block of material with a square opening formed therein containing sides 101a, 101b, 101c, and 101d.

10 Tab 102 is a solid square block formed on the end of container 1, such as to fit in the square opening of tab 101 such that sides 102a, 102b, 102c and 102d of tab 102 are located directly adjacent to and in contact with sides 101a, 101b, 101c and 101d, respectively, of tab 101. This contact

15 directly locks container 1a to container 1b. Note, however that the containers are not able to be rotated relative to each other using this connection system to attach container 1a to container 1b.

20 The structure shown in Figs. 11A through 11E is similar to the structure shown in Figs. 9A through 9E except that abutment 97 on container 1 in Figs. 9A through 9E has been replaced by a recessed trapezoidal area 197 on container 1 to receive a trapezoidal abutment 194 or 195 on hinge 192

25 and by a recessed slot 198 in the bottom of the container 1 to receive a portion 199a or 199b of hinge 192. As shown in Fig. 11C, recessed trapezoidal area 197 on container 1 is sized to receive protuberance 194 on hinge 192 such that sides 194a, 194b and 194c of protuberance 194 snap fit and

30 thus mate with sides 197a, 197b and 197c of trapezoidal recess 197 when dishes or containers 1a and 1b are joined

5 together using hinge 192. Trapezoidal abutment 194 from
section 193a of hinge 192 mates with the trapezoidal recess
197 of dish 1a so as to form a forced fit connection.
Simultaneously, trapezoidal abutment 195 on hinge section
193b mates in a forced fit connection with trapezoidal
10 recess 197 in dish 1b so that sides 195c, 195b and 195a of
abutment 195 are directly adjacent to sides 197a, 197b and
197c, respectively of trapezoidal recess 197 in container
1b. In addition, extension 199a of section 193a of hinge
192 extends into the recess 198 formed in the bottom skirt 3
15 of container 1 while extension 199b of hinge section 193b
extends into the similar recess 198b (Fig. 11D) in container
1b. A user can fold containers 1a and 1b such that handles
4a and 4b form a combined handle for carrying the container
system as shown Fig. 11E.

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Note that the edges of trapezoidal (or any other
appropriate shape) abutments 194, 195 are slightly larger on
the outer side than on the side of abutments 194, 195
closest to the center plane of hinge 192 while the inner
25 dimensions of trapezoidal opening 197 are slightly larger
than the outer dimensions of opening 197 to ensure a snap
fit of containers 1a and 1b on hinge 192.

Figs. 12A, 12B, 12C and 12D show an alternative hinge
30 structure 122 for use with this invention. Vertical tabs
124a and 124b extend from hinge sections 123a and 123b,

5 respectively, for insertion into slots 125a and 125b on
containers 1a and 1b, respectively, to form a container
system as disclosed in this invention. Tab 124a on hinge
section 123a inserts into slot 125a in skirt 3a of container
1, while tab 124b on hinge section 123b inserts into slot
10 125b in skirt 3b of container 1b as shown in Fig. 12D.
Extensions 128a and 128b on hinge sections 123a and 123b,
respectively, fit into recesses 129a and 129b in skirts 3a
and 3b, respectively. Rod 127 allows hinge sections 123a
and 123b to rotate with respect to each other. Rod 127 is
15 inserted through openings in tabs 120a through 120d (FIG.
12B) contained on hinge section 123a and, through openings
in interdigitated mating tabs 120e through 120g on hinge
section 123b.

20 Openings 126a and 126b are formed in hinge sections
123a and 123b, respectively, to allow a user's hand to lift
the combined container system including containers 1a and 1b
(Fig. 12D) when hinge 122 is used to join containers 1a and
1b to form the container system.

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Although the present invention has been described with
reference to specific embodiments, these embodiments are
illustrative only and not limiting. Many other applications
and embodiments of the present invention will be apparent in
30 light of this disclosure and the following claims.